

Laos Cycle

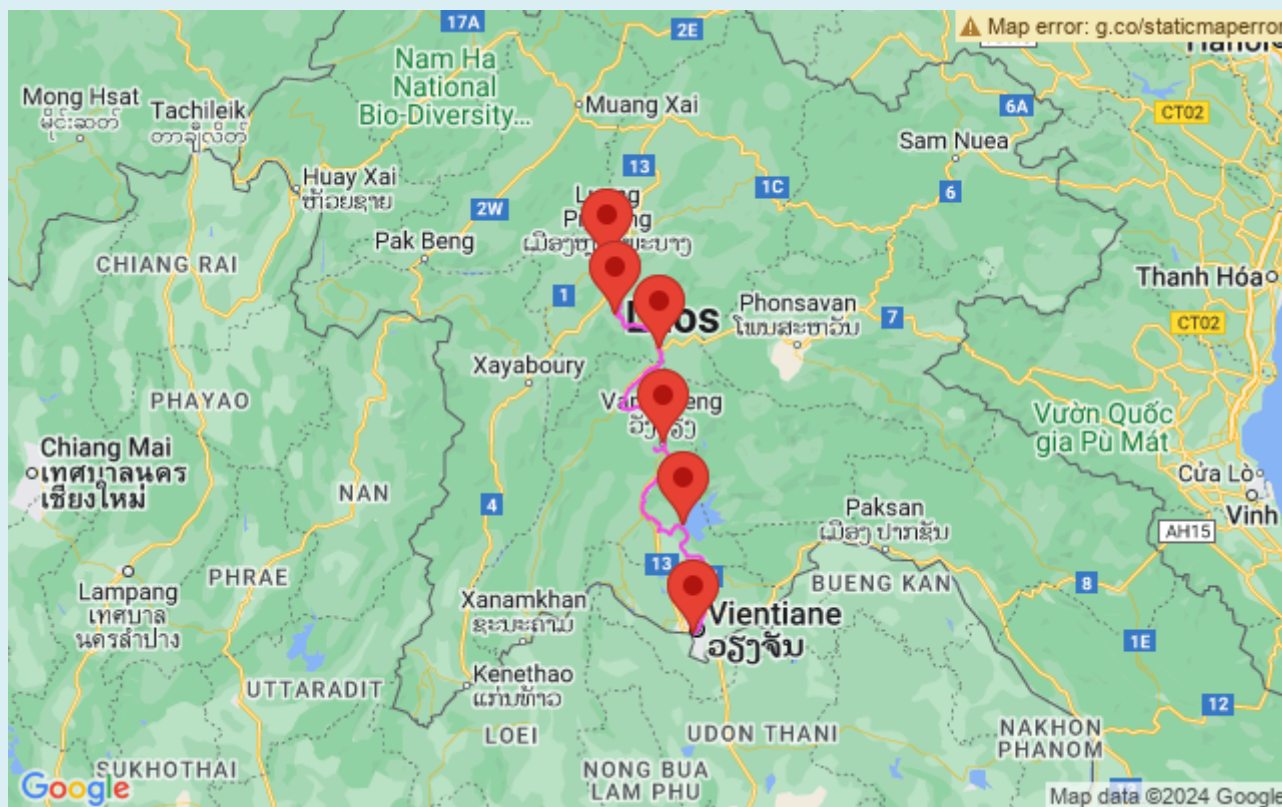


Duration: **11 days**

Our exciting and challenging route takes us from the Mekong valley through spectacular mountain scenery to ancient Luang Prabang, witnessing the traditional way of life in the remote, friendly villages we pass. Challenging cycling and cultural discovery – this trip has it all!

Laos is a country of dense forests, rugged mountains and dazzling green rice paddies, with the Mekong River dominating the lowlands. The landscapes are dotted with ancient Buddhist temples, graceful French colonial houses and picturesque hill-tribe villages where the local people still wear traditional dress. Our adventure ends in Luang Prabang, one of the most impressive cities in South-East Asia, with its serene gilded temples and riverside scenes.

DETAILED ITINERARY



Day 1: Depart London

Day 2: Arrive Vientiane

On arrival we transfer to our hotel and have time to freshen up and prepare our bikes for the start of our exciting cycle challenge. Depending on our arrival time, we'll take a city tour around this laid-back capital, which lies on a bend of the Mekong River. We'll return to the hotel in time for dinner and a detailed trip briefing before getting a good night's sleep, ready for the start of our challenge! Night hotel.

Day 3: Vientiane – Nam Ngum Lake

The cycling begins! Leaving Vientiane on busy roads, it's not long before we leave the city behind and start to appreciate the beautiful Laotian countryside. Roughly 90% of Laos is mountainous, and as we ride along the flattish valley we can see misty green mountain slopes in the distance. We share the road with tuk-tuks and jumbos – the colourful motorised local taxis – and some pedal-powered samlaws. Motorcycles often transport bulky goods or entire families with fascinating demonstrations of balance. This is a wonderful introduction to the local culture! We stop for a break at a local market, which provides a very photogenic introduction to the huge variety of colourful exotic produce available. Frequented by the Hmong people, one of the many ethnic hill-tribes living in Laos, this allows us to witness yet another side of Laos's cultural diversity. As we near our destination, we have a sharp climb up to our hotel at the edge of Nam Ngum Lake, a man-made reservoir ringed with forested

mountains and dotted with wooded islands formed when the lake was created. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 96km

Day 4: Nam Ngum Lake – Vang Vieng

Today's ride is on quieter roads as we ride north through small villages. We'll see friendly children playing in the streets – usually stopping to wave curiously at us – and crops such as rice are often laid out on the road to dry. Different generations work side-by-side in the rice-paddies, often knee-deep in water, wearing traditional conical hats with simple woven baskets on their backs. Our day today is hillier, with some particularly steep inclines, but the reward of witnessing daily life in this beautiful country more than makes up for our efforts. We arrive in riverside Vang Vieng, a lovely town surrounded by beautiful sheer karst outcrops and dense jungle. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 85km

Day 5: Vang Vieng

A more relaxing day today to give our legs some respite before the more mountainous roads ahead of us! We set off through the back-roads east of Vang Vieng, enjoying the stunning scenery and the scenes of daily village life. This area is known for its karst mountains and caves, some of which are home to ancient shrines. Most of our route is off-road and takes us through rarely-visited villages; you'll gain an insight into how most people live in rural Laos. If you love experiencing different cultures, today will be a real highlight! Our route returns via some limestone caves where we'll have the opportunity for a refreshing swim – welcome relief after our hot ride. Back in Vang Vieng, we'll have time to explore the shops and markets, or just relax. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 35-45km

Day 6: Vang Vieng – Phou Khoun

An early start today, as we continue north through low rolling hills, fields and more villages. To the west the views over the mountains are absolutely stunning. After our first notable climb there's a great descent and our road levels out as we pass along the valley of the Nam Lik River and the small town of Kasi. Roughly marking our halfway point, Kasi is ringed with hills and rice-paddies, with some karst outcrops punctuating the green. It marks our long ascent into more mountainous terrain, and we ride along hill-ridges with breath-taking views of mountains and jungle that stretch for miles. This is the old Royal Road, leading to the royal capital Luang Prabang. The road levels out at times, but we are predominantly climbing till the end of the day, and parts of it are tough – though our higher elevation does make it cooler! Our day ends at Phou Khoun, a small market town, formerly a French outpost. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 99km

Day 7: Phou Khoun – Kiewkacham

A shorter day today, but a very demanding one; many may find this the toughest day of our challenge. The scenery is as beautiful as ever, with villages of thatched houses nestling among forests of bamboo, tropical hardwoods and

evergreens, and you may see waterfalls tumbling down the green slopes. With these beautiful surroundings to distract us, we tackle the winding hair-pin bends and steep inclines with determination! We negotiate a long, strenuous climb which contours the mountain ridges, followed by a thrilling descent. The only way onward is up again, and we pace ourselves steadily as we climb and descend through the mountains, until a lovely freewheeling descent brings us into Kiewkacham. Staying in this small friendly mountain village provides us with a wonderful cultural experience. Night guesthouse.

Cycle approx. 55km

Day 8: Kiewkacham – Luang Prabang

Our last day of cycling! Leaving the village behind, we have another relatively demanding climb to summit, but our highest ridges are behind us! A long sweeping downhill stretch takes us through a landscape of lush forest and limestone mountains; the small Hmong villages that we pass seem even tinier in contrast. We descend to the Nam Khan River and follow this for a few miles as it meanders through idyllic countryside. Turning west, we pedal our last few miles towards Luang Prabang, the ancient capital of the Lao kingdom – a spectacular city and a fitting end to our challenge. A World Heritage Site since 1995, it is enclosed by rivers and mountains and feels very remote. Studded with monasteries and temples, golden spires and teak mansions, the city is a delight to explore. We check into our hotel and relax, enjoying our surroundings. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 78km

Day 9: Free Day Luang Prabang

This morning we have a city tour, visiting the impressive Royal palace and Wat Xieng Thong (meaning 'Golden City Monastery'), as well as some of the other main temples in the city. After lunch you are free to explore as much or as little as you like – there are plenty of other temples to visit, wander the cobbled lanes of the old town, try a Lao massage or simply sit by the Mekong and watch the world go by. Tonight we meet again for a big celebration to mark our huge achievement. *(Lunch and Dinner not included)*

Day 10: Depart Luang Prabang

We have free time until a transfer takes us to the airport for our homebound flight (usually via Vientiane). *(Lunch not included if not in-flight)*

Day 11: Arrive UK

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- All transport from London to Vientiane / Luang Prabang return
- All meals except where specified, accommodation
- Discover Adventure leaders; doctor with a group of 15 or more participants; local guides and cooks
- Vehicle support and back-up on the trips

- 21-speed mountain bike (Trek / Giant or equivalent)
- City tour in Luang Prabang and any other sites visited as part of the itinerary

WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- Three meals as specified in the itinerary
- Travel insurance
- Cycle helmet (compulsory) and 2 water bottles
- Personal spending money, souvenirs and drinks
- Tips for the local guides and support crew
- Inbound airport departure tax (no tax applied at the time of writing)
- Laos entry visa
- Fees for any optional sites, attractions or activities
- Airline taxes; we cap these so that £250.00 is the maximum you will pay
- Any applicable surcharges as per Terms and Conditions

GRADE | TOUGH (3)



Trip grades range from Challenging (1) to Extreme (5).

TOUGH trips can involve tough terrain, with some very rigorous days; weather, altitude and/or basic living conditions will add to the challenge. They demand good stamina, fitness and a determined attitude.

See [Trip Grading Explained](#).

CHALLENGE INFORMATION

DETAILED INFORMATION

Leaders & Trip Support

Your trip will be led by experienced Discover Adventure leaders. Our leaders are selected for their experience in harsh wilderness environments, knowledge of travel in remote areas, friendliness and approachability, sense of humour and ability to safely and effectively deal with any situation that arises. They are also trained in expedition first aid. You are in very safe hands with a Discover Adventure leader. Usually leaders are based in the UK or other English-speaking countries and lead for us regularly throughout the year in many different countries. In some instances, trips are led by in-country guides with a wealth of knowledge about the region; they have been trained by us to provide the level of support expected on a Discover Adventure trip.

Trip Doctor

An expedition doctor or medic accompanies the group (dependent on group size.) Their role is to look after the well-being

of the whole group and deal with any medical incidents. They help the crew to ensure the trip runs smoothly, and encourage you when things get tough. The total number of crew looking after you will depend on the final size of your group.

Local Support Crew

Our local support crew is made up of local guides, assisted by drivers, porters, cooks and other support staff, depending on the type of trip. Local guides know the area well, and are a great source of knowledge about local customs and lifestyles. Not all support crew will speak English well, but are very friendly and approachable. The Discover Adventure crew work closely with the local crew to ensure your trip runs smoothly and safely.

Your leader will arrange a collection of tips for the local support crew at the end of your trek, and you will be provided with a guideline amount in advance. Tipping is not obligatory, but once you see how hard they work on your behalf you will be happy to donate something! All our local crew are paid wages, but bear in mind that the average wage in many countries may be less than you would spend on an average night out.

Trip Safety

Your safety, and that of the rest of the group, is our highest priority. Our trips are designed and planned with safety in mind. Your crew will be equipped with communication devices (eg phones, radios and/or emergency satellite phones), medical kit and other safety apparatus appropriate to the destination. Our leaders always have access to our 24-hour emergency UK back-up. They are responsible for safety on the trip, and will make any changes to the itinerary they deem necessary, should local conditions dictate. Pre-trip administration - such as medical questionnaires and travel insurance as appropriate - is all done with your safety in mind.

Foreign Travel Advice

For the latest travel advice from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Flight Information

Group flights usually leave from London Heathrow or Gatwick on scheduled airlines and are booked through Discover Adventure Ltd under ATOL licence 5636. By travelling with Discover Adventure you are protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

Your journey may involve a transit en route; details of route and flight times will be confirmed several months before departure. We do not always use the same airline for each destination; if you wish to know the probable carrier and flight times, please call for details. You will usually receive confirmed flight details several months before departure. Our itineraries are always based on current flight schedules and are therefore subject to change by the airline. If you prefer to book your own flights please ask us for a land-only cost.

Accommodation

We stay in a variety of hotels/lodges ranging from quite simple, friendly guesthouse-style to more international-style hotels in larger towns or cities. Standards are generally good, in great locations, but there may be a night or two where facilities are more basic, as you'd expect in very remote, untouristed or rural areas.

Roomshare Arrangements

Accommodation is usually on a twin-share basis. Occasionally we may use hostel-style accommodation. Please tell us if you know somebody else on the trip that you would like to share with and we will try our best to accommodate your request. If you don't know anyone else in the group don't worry, we always pair you up with someone of the same gender, and a similar age where possible. We do not charge a single supplement if you are a solo traveller in a shared room.

Food & Dietary Requirements

The food provided is plentiful, often local in style and freshly-cooked, and will give you plenty of energy. Sometimes we enjoy a buffet-style lunch-stop, other times we might have packed lunches. On some trips we stop at small local restaurants. Dinners are generally eaten at our accommodation each evening. In some regions there may be less variety than you are used to, and in others fresh meat or produce can be harder to come by. Any meals not included are listed in the itinerary and are generally on travel / free days, giving you the opportunity to explore and try other culinary experiences! There is always something to suit different budgets.

Being vegetarian or having other dietary requirements is not usually a problem provided you let us know well in advance. Please do not expect as much variety as you would have access to at home – we may be in very rural or remote areas, or among people of a different culture who may not understand your requirements, however willing they are to help. If you know there are plenty of foods you cannot eat we strongly recommend you bring extra snacks from home so you can top up your energy supply. Please feel free to ask us for advice.

Luggage

Your luggage, food, water and equipment is transported for you from one night-stop to the next. If there is easy road access this is done by vehicle; if not porters, mules or even camels might carry your bags, depending on the terrain.

Space is limited and hard-sided luggage is not suitable, so it is essential that your kit is packed in a soft bag, rucksack or expedition kitbag. Ask us about our specially-designed low-cost kitbags if you don't have one already. You should also bring a small daypack to carry for items needed during the day as you will not have access to your main luggage until the evening.

PREPARING FOR THE CHALLENGE

Fitness Levels

This is designed to be a challenge, and it is vital that you train sufficiently for it. We will supply you with a thorough

training guide once you have registered. We expect all participants to train hard in advance, but we respect everyone's limits and do not expect everyone to maintain the same pace. Inadequate training is likely to have an impact not just on your chances of completing the challenge, but enjoying it too - and we want you to have the time of your life!

Our challenges attract people of all levels of experience, fitness and ability as well as all ages and backgrounds. We design our challenges so that everyone can go at their own pace: this is not a race. If you have concerns about your fitness or if you have reduced mobility please do contact us for a confidential chat about whether this challenge is appropriate for you.

For logistical and safety reasons we sometimes need to re-group, so the front-runners may find themselves waiting for the slower ones. Please relax, and remember that this is a team effort that enables people to achieve their personal goals and earn sponsorship.

Passport & Visa / Vaccinations

Entry requirements vary depending on your destination and nationality. It is your responsibility to ensure your passport is valid, and any visas are obtained in good time. Check the [FCO's advice](#) on entry requirements for your destination to be sure. Please ensure you allow plenty of time to apply for your visa; we will provide you with all necessary information 6 weeks prior to departure to assist with your application.

Your routine UK schedule of vaccinations should be up-to-date (especially tetanus). We recommend you check [Fit For Travel](#) for further details. You should always check with a GP or travel clinic for up-to-date travel health advice as it does change.

Clothing & Kit

We plan our trips around the optimal weather conditions, but could still be exposed to bad weather at any time. It is vital you are prepared for all conditions. We provide you with a detailed packing kit-list on registration, with plenty of information, and we are always available if you need advice.

Cultural Differences

For most people, the main attraction of travelling to a different country is to see new sights and enjoy new experiences. Sometimes those new experiences can make life harder or more inconvenient than you may like, such as toilet hygiene or different food, or simply a different attitude to solving problems. This is all part of the challenge you are signing up for! We are very privileged to live in a country with a high standard of living, and travelling exposes us to different challenges - all of which help broaden our horizons. We can guarantee that coming face-to-face with experiences outside your normal 'comfort zone' will help you bond with your fellow participants and provide you with plenty of things to laugh about! A sense of humour and sense of adventure are two of the most important things to bring with you!



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Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Please note: This document was downloaded on 25 Apr 2024, and the challenge is subject to change.